

Ménage

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Ménage

by [The German Grim Reaper](#)

Summary

Ménage, noun: the members of a household.

Two weeks after Will's kidnapping and the subsequent arrest of Jack Crawford, things are going back to normal for the Murder Family. That is, until Abigail has a chance encounter with a certain brunette and suddenly their little family finds itself with a new member.

or: Three times Abigail didn't kiss Cassie Hopper-Lounds, and one time she did.

Notes

I'm back with another fic! Probably not exactly the sequel you were imagining, but it's the one I felt like writing, so here it is. I'm also working on one that actually focuses on Will and Hannibal murdering people, but that one isn't ready and this one is so here you go.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

When the doorbell rang, Abigail panicked.

She wasn't supposed to be here. She was supposed to be at the cliff home, safely away from any prying eyes, looking after Will's dogs as he and Hannibal went away for a long weekend. But their guest in the basement had managed to slip his restraints the previous day, and Hannibal had told her to fetch some Lorazepam from his house so she could keep him unconscious without the risks inherent in a head injury.

It would, after all, hardly do for the man's senses to dull before Will and Hannibal got through torturing him. He'd been there nearly two weeks now and they'd hardly done anything, preferring to let him stew while Will took the time to recover from his own injuries. Honestly, all they'd done so far was castrate him, which (although it was certainly a formidable punishment) was hardly up to the Ripper's usual standards of torture. Thus, his near escape and Abigail's quest to find Lorazepam.

But now somebody was here. A person. At the house. And nobody was here to answer the door.

Abigail moved to the door cautiously, not daring to make a sound. Should she hide away in some other room and hope the visitor went away? She couldn't afford to be recognized, after all, not after faking her death so many months before. But curiosity tugged at her; she hadn't spoken to anyone who wasn't Will or Hannibal in months- they refused to let her speak to the man in the basement, not that she wanted to- and she was getting lonely.

Peering out the peephole, Abigail determined that it wasn't one of her fathers' FBI coworkers. It was, in fact, a girl who looked to be about her age. She looked nervous, almost impossibly so. Before Abigail knew what she was doing, she opened the door.

"Can I help you?"

The girl blinked. Her hair was dark, raven-black that abruptly turned to chocolate brown at the roots. Her eyes were a wide dark brown, her lashes thick, and her skin spotted with a small amount of dark brown freckles.

In short, she was the most beautiful thing Abigail had ever seen.

“Um.” The girl said, looking at Abigail like she was surprised to see her there. Which, to be fair, she probably was. “Is Dr Lecter home?”

“No.” Abigail admitted, wondering why there was a teenage girl on the psychiatrist’s doorstep.

“What about Mr Graham?”

Abigail shook her head simply. Then she paused. She really, really shouldn’t be doing this. She should shut the door, hope the girl didn’t recognize her, and let that be the end of it. Instead, she found herself stepping out of the way. “Want to come in?” She offered hopefully.

And that was how she found herself sitting in Hannibal’s parlor pouring a cup of tea for a stranger.

“My name’s Cassie.” The girl introduced herself.

“Abigail,” Abigail replied, then wondered if perhaps she should have used a fake name.

There was a long moment of silence in which neither of them was sure what to say.

“The tea.” Cassie said suddenly. Abigail’s brows furrowed. Then she felt the splash of hot liquid onto her hand and cursed, setting the tea kettle down and shaking off her hand.

“Sorry.” She muttered, embarrassed.

“You should probably run that under cold water.” Cassie warned her.

Abigail shook her head, although she gave Cassie a pleased smile at the advice. “I’ve had worse.” She assured her, absentmindedly reaching up to adjust the scarf on her neck. When she realized what she was doing, she dropped her hand as if she’d been burned again.

Abigail’s name and face had been in the news several times, after all, along with the information that her throat had been slit by her father. Wanting to draw attention away, lest Cassie make the connection, she quickly changed the topic. “So why were you looking for Hannibal?”

Cassie fidgeted in her seat and Abigail couldn’t help but frown a little bit. She got the impression that Cassie wasn’t usually this nervous. “He said we could come by any time... I know I should have called, but I didn’t have his number.”

Abigail had spent enough time with Hannibal that she recognized when someone was avoiding a question. Still, she’d play along, for now. “We?”

“My sister and I. She’s not here right now, she’s on a business trip with my dad.”

“And your mom?”

Cassie scowled at that.

Jackpot, Abigail thought. Clearly this had something to do with Cassie’s sudden appearance on their doorstep. Also, Abigail had clearly been spending too much time with Hannibal.

“Out on a drinking binge.” Cassie said. “I’m sure she’ll be back by the end of the week.”

Abigail frowned. It *was* the end of the week. “How long’s she been gone?” She asked.

Cassie shrugged. “Three days. It’s not that big a deal, I’ve dealt with it enough times. It’s just...”

“Just what?” Abigail prompted, trying not to get distracted by how goddamn *pretty* Cassie was. This was not the time.

Cassie shuffled her feet, looking a bit embarrassed. “I actually came to see if I could raid your fridge.” She admitted. “Mom usually leaves a credit card behind when she goes, but this time I guess she forgot.”

...*Oh*. That wasn’t good. “Of course I can get you something to eat. Hannibal and Will are gonna be out of town for a few days, so there probably won’t be any leftovers, but I can cook something up.”

“Oh, no you don’t have to-” Cassie began, but Abigail was already standing up.

“No dietary restrictions?” She asked. She’d never been a good cook, but she was sure she could come up with something edible.

Cassie shook her head. “No.”

She watched in silence as Abigail led the way into the kitchen and began to cook. Despite how absurdly fancy most of Hannibal’s food was, she was well aware of Will’s ‘secret’ stash of junk food hidden under the false bottom of the silverware drawer. She pulled out the bag of Wonderbread and a package of pre-sliced American cheese.

“Grilled cheese?” Cassie asked, sounding amused, as Abigail turned on the stove and cut some butter into a pan.

“Well, I could try to make you something fancier, but even after three months of living with Hannibal I’m a terrible cook. Do you want anything to drink?”

“Water is fine. Are you... I don’t mean to pry, but I didn’t think Dr Lecter mentioned any children.”

Abigail considered it, flipping over the sandwich as she did so. She decided to tell a version of the truth. “I’m his... ward. He and Will work with the FBI, and they’ve had serial killers come after them before, so they do their best to keep me hidden. Wouldn’t want to present anyone with a target.”

Cassie frowned at the matter-of-face way she said it, but she didn’t say anything. Instead, she sipped at her water until Abigail finished cooking the sandwich.

“So why Hannibal?” Abigail asked her, putting a second sandwich in the pan for herself. “I mean, I’m not complaining, but surely you’ve got friends who could help you.”

Cassie shrugged. “Not really. I mean, they’re all off at college, and I’m stuck at home looking after my baby sister. I wasn’t gonna drive to NYU with a half tank of gas just to steal a bowl of cereal.”

Abigail nodded. “Yeah. I was supposed to be in college this year too, but I took a gap year.” That was true as well, if the term *gap year* could be stretched to include *my father tried to kill me and I was in a coma and now I can’t go to school because I’ve faked my death*.

“Yeah? What schools were you-” Cassie began, but whatever she had been about to say was cut off by the ringing of Abigail’s phone.

She glanced at the caller I.D. It read only ‘H’, but that was enough. “I’m really sorry, but I’ve got to take this.” She said, glancing at Cassie apologetically before swiping to answer, moving into the other room so she wouldn’t be overheard. “Hannibal?”

“Abigail.” He greeted her pleasantly. “How was your drive? I hope you found the Lorazepam without too much difficulty.”

She cringed slightly. “Yeah. About that...

“Were you unable to find it? It should be in the medicine cabinet in the master bathroom, exactly where I showed you the last time.”

“I kind of stopped looking.” She admitted. There was a pause, and then she added, “Please don’t be mad...”

On the other end of the phone, Hannibal sighed. “What did you do, Abigail?” He asked, already sounding resigned to cleaning up whatever mess she’d gotten herself into.

“There was this girl on your doorstep and I know I’m not supposed to talk to anyone but she looked really upset and I couldn’t just *leave* her there.” She said in a rush. “And I don’t think she recognized me, so it’s really not that big a-”

“Abigail.” Hannibal’s voice was sharp. “You spoke to someone? You know how much of a risk that poses for you.”

Abigail bristled. “Well maybe if you didn’t keep me cooped up in that house all the time... And anyway, she seems really nice.”

“I’m glad you’re making friends.” He said dryly. “I trust you’ll be inviting her over for dinner soon?” It took Abigail a moment to catch onto the darker meaning behind his words, but when she did, she scowled.

“No. She’s been perfectly polite to me and you’re not allowed to kill her.”

“If it comes to a choice between a stranger’s life and your freedom, Abigail, you know which one I will choose.”

“Well, it *hasn't* come down to a choice. She didn't recognize me and she hasn't seen my scar. And besides, she's not a stranger- she says she knows you.”

Abigail could practically hear Hannibal's frown through the phone. “I don't make a habit of befriending teenage girls, Abigail.”

“She said her name is Cassie?”

There was a moment of silence before Hannibal spoke again, sounding much more relaxed. “Well, I think we can make an exception for Cassie. Her mother was very rude to me when we met and I was planning on having her over for dinner soon. Is Iphigenia there?”

Abigail frowned. “Iphigenia?” She repeated, fairly certain she'd butchered the pronunciation.

“Her sister.” Hannibal clarified. “I told them they could come over any time, although I hadn't considered that it may be during our vacation.”

“Yeah, well, apparently her mother is also on vacation and let her home alone with no money and no groceries. I gave her a grilled cheese, but...”

Even over the phone, she could hear Hannibal's carefully controlled exhale. “There is some emergency money taped to the underside of the exotic spice rack. If she refuses to accept it, slip it into her pocket anyway.”

That startled a laugh out of her. “I'm pretty sure she'd think I was trying to feel her up if I did that. But yeah, sure, I'll give her the money.”

She hung up the phone and made her way back into the kitchen, where Cassie had long since finished her sandwich and was now attempting to save the one Abigail had forgotten in the pan.

Abigail smiled even as she ran over to help fan the smoke away from the fire alarm. She could get used to this ‘having friends’ thing.

The next time she saw Cassie was four days later. She’d been spending the day alone, working on her college applications under a false name, when she saw Will’s name light up her phone. She answered it, wondering vaguely whether she would be asked to look after his dogs again. “Hello?”

“Hey, Abby.” She could hear the smile in his voice. “We were wondering if you wanted to come over for dinner? We’ve got a couple of guests over that we thought you might like to see.”

Abigail frowned, not quite sure what guests he was referring to. Alana Bloom, perhaps? But no, they wouldn’t let her see Abigail, or at least not unless Hannibal had finally decided to eat her. Who else did Abigail know?

“You’re not going to kill anyone, are you?” She asked. It wasn’t that she had anything against killing- she hadn’t said anything about the man in the basement, who was now missing one lung and the majority of his left leg- but she would rather not walk into a situation without knowing it was coming.

Will laughed. “No. It’s that girl you met the other day, Cassie, and her little sister. Hannibal tracked them down to make sure their mom had come back, and he ended up inviting them over.”

“Oh.” Abigail perked up at that. “Okay! What time do you want me to get there?”

“Uh, eight? Be careful driving over, you don’t want anyone to see you.”

She rolled her eyes. “Yeah, yeah, I know. I *have* been doing this for months, you know.”

She pulled into her usual spot just before eight, brushing a strand of hair out of her face and tucking it behind her remaining ear. She was four blocks away from Hannibal’s house, far enough that her car wouldn’t be spotted if there was any surveillance on him. From here, she would walk the rest of the way and sneak in through Hannibal’s back garden. It was a routine she had perfected over the months of living at the cliff house, although she’d had to use it more and more now that Will was aware of her continued survival.

She was only about two blocks away when she heard the rumble of an engine behind her. She turned, taking a step away from the road and further onto the sidewalk, to allow the car to pass. Instead, it slowed down.

The passenger side window rolled down. At first, Abigail could only see the tiny redhead sitting there, but then she caught sight of a familiar face leaning over from the drivers’ side. “Going my way?” Cassie asked her cheerfully.

Abigail rolled her eyes, but she was smiling despite herself. She climbed into the backseat. “Nice to see you again,” she offered. “Is this your sister?”

Cassie nodded, opening her mouth to speak, but she stopped when the younger girl began to talk instead. “Are you the girl Cassie likes?”

A quick glance at Cassie confirmed that the other girl had gone red. Abigail could feel her own cheeks warming a bit. “I don’t think so. We only met the other day. My name’s Abigail.”

There was a long moment of silence. Before Abigail could work out something to say, they were pulling up in front of Hannibal’s house.

“Why don’t you tell her your name?” Cassie prompted her sister as she undid her seatbelt and got out of the car. Abigail followed suit, pausing just after she’d closed the door as she

waited for Cassie to walk around the car.

“My name’s Gene.” The little girl introduced herself.

Iphigenia, Abigail remembered. Hannibal had mentioned her name in their phone call the other day.

They were only halfway up the sidewalk when the door swung open. Will was positively beaming at them, a crisp white apron wrapped around his waist. His bruises were almost completely faded, now, although his left cheekbone was still a sickly shade of yellow where the damage had been the worst. His right arm was in a sling now, free from the bulky white cast that had previously been wrapped around it. He had recovered a lot in two weeks, Abigail decided, and she was glad to see that his mini-vacation seemed to have cheered him up some.

“Hey, Will!” She greeted him cheerfully, going in for a hug. It was a bit awkward, having to be careful of his still-healing injuries, but he pressed a kiss to the top of her head and she smiled. She was hesitant to call Will and Hannibal her dads, considering the bad experience she’d had with fathers in the past, but that was probably the closest word for what they were.

“Hey, Abigail.” He said softly, then turned to address Cassie and Gene. “Come on inside, dinner should be ready in just a few minutes.”

When Abigail stepped inside, the first thing she noticed was the decorations. The air smelled like an enticing mixture of pine needles and spice. Not spice like ‘cinnamon and nutmeg’ but spice like ‘hot peppers and onions’. In fact, if she had to guess based on the smell, Abigail would say that Hannibal was making a chili of some sort.

“It looks amazing in here.” Cassie commented, looking around with interest at all of the decorations. Pine branches, glass ornaments, and bright bursts of yellow sunflowers dotted the room. Clearly, Hannibal had done some decorating since he’d gotten home. Abigail had almost forgotten it was December.

“Smells good, too.” Abigail added, knowing that Hannibal would appreciate the compliment that he could no doubt hear from the kitchen.

“I hope you like gumbo.” Will added. He seemed to be talking directly to Abigail with that one; she frowned for a moment, before realizing that Hannibal had most likely cleared it with Cassie when he’d invited them.

“Never had it.” She admitted. “But I don’t mind spicy food, so I bet it’ll be good.”

“Everything that I make is good.” Hannibal countered, approaching them from down the hallway. Abigail laughed.

“Yeah, yeah, we know all about your god complex.” She teased. He only smiled in response.

“I trust your journey went well?” He asked Cassie and Gene, slipping back into his role as ‘polite host.’

Cassie nodded, gracing him with a smile. “It’s not a long drive, and luckily it hasn’t started to snow yet. Thank you for inviting us.”

“Of course. It’s my pleasure to cook for guests, especially when those guests are friends of Abigail’s.”

He led them into the dining room. Cassie trailed behind the rest, watching with a soft smile as Gene practically skipped down the hallway.

“I really am glad you could make it.” Abigail admitted.

“Of course. What are friends for?” Cassie graced her with a smile, and Abigail could feel herself melting into it. She straightened up, doing her best not to blush. Then Cassie leaned in a bit closer, something close to confusion in her gaze. “Did something happen?”

Abigail followed her gaze to Will's retreating form. *Ah*. "He got kidnapped a couple of weeks ago." She admitted. "It was... well, it was complicated, but it's over now."

Cassie frowned, looking even more concerned than before. "One of the serial killers you told me about?"

Abigail shook her head minutely. "No, it was- actually, I'm not sure if I'm supposed to be telling you this, but it was his boss at the FBI. Like I said, complicated."

Cassie's brow furrowed, but before she could ask any more questions, they were in the dining room. Hannibal's jacket was folded over his usual seat at the head of the table, and Will had claimed the seat to his right. That left the seat at the opposite end for Abigail and the two seats opposite Will for Cassie and Gene.

To everyone's surprise, Gene quickly claimed the seat closest to Hannibal for herself. He looked a bit taken aback, clearly having expected her to sit between the two girls, but then he smiled.

"Tonight we'll be having a traditional Louisiana gumbo, courtesy of Will here. To pair with it we have a white sparkling cider. We also have milk and orange juice in the fridge if you would prefer- don't worry, I won't be offended."

Abigail smiled as he poured her a glass of the drink. It looked a bit like champagne, although she could smell the tang of ginger and something sweet. "No wine today?" She asked, giving him a knowing smile.

He gave her a stern look. "I thought it best to stick with non-alcoholic beverages tonight."

Her smile widened. He'd never shied away from giving her alcohol before- in fact, he actively *encouraged* her to drink wine, since she appreciated it so much more than Will did- which meant he was being responsible for their guests' sake. Not Cassie- she was Abigail's age, and Abigail didn't doubt that Hannibal would have offered her a drink under normal

circumstances. No, he was being responsible for *Iphigenia*. One could almost say he was being... paternal?

He poured Cassie only a small amount, allowing her to taste it before filling her glass any higher. She took a small sip, hummed, and nodded in pleasure. He poured her a bit more to top it off.

“Why don’t you try a sip of this, Gene?” Cassie asked, sliding the glass over to Gene’s place at the table. The younger girl took one dubious sip, then wrinkled her nose.

“No thanks.” She said, shaking her head and sliding it back over to Cassie. Then she looked up at Hannibal. “Could I please have some milk?”

He graced her with a smile. “Will, would you?” Will nodded and disappeared into the kitchen to fetch the milk.

As they waited for Will to return, Abigail swirled the glass the way Hannibal had taught her. She sniffed it, frowning as she tried to make out the distinct flavors. “Ginger and apple and... peach?” She guessed.

Hannibal gave her a pleased look. “You are becoming quite a perceptive taster.” He complimented her.

Cassie was looking at her oddly, and Abigail flushed under the attention. “He’s something of a wine connoisseur.” She explained for Cassie’s benefit. “He’s been trying to teach me since pretty much the moment we met.”

Will came back with the milk and they all sat down to eat. Hannibal served her a hearty serving of gumbo and she barely held back an undignified moan as the smell reached her nose. She waited for everyone to have their bowl before picking up her spoon and going to take a bite. Just before it reached her lips, she froze.

“What kind of meat is this?” She asked. Or, well, *demande*d was probably more the word. It was probably rude, but she couldn’t bring herself to care.

Hannibal raised an eyebrow. “Shrimp, crab, and andouille sausage.” He replied coolly. “Unfortunately I didn’t get to make the sausage from scratch this time.”

Abigail relaxed as the meaning of his words hit her. It wasn’t human meat. She wasn’t particularly fond of the idea of cannibalism herself, especially after what she’d gone through with her father back in Minnesota. Hannibal mostly respected that, and although he did occasionally serve her something less suited to her tastes, he always let her know beforehand. But, well, she did know how much he enjoyed feeding his special brand of ‘pork’ to unsuspecting guests.

“Why are you asking about the meat?” Gene asked innocently. “Are you vegetarian or something?”

Abigail laughed and shook her head. “Hannibal’s been trying to feed me snails for weeks. I told him I don’t care how authentic it is, I’m not eating anything that came out of a shell.”

“Crabs come out of a shell.” Will pointed out, amused.

Abigail scowled at him. “You know what I meant.” She thought it had been a pretty good lie, actually, considering how quickly she’d had to come up with it.

And just like that, the equilibrium around the dinner table was restored. Abigail took a spoonful of her gumbo and let herself bask in the warmth and friendly spirits.

It was strange to go from having no one but Hannibal one day to having what felt like an entire family the next. It was Christmas Eve and Abigail was at Hannibal’s city home once

again, this time watching *Friends* reruns while Cassie lounged next to her on the couch.

“Remind me again where your dads are?” Cassie asked, reaching for another handful of popcorn. With Hannibal out of the house, they had once again broken into Will’s not-so-secret stash of junk food.

“They’re not my dads.” Abigail denied immediately, but the words tasted like ash on her tongue. Were they her dads? She resolved to think about it later, some time when there *wasn’t* a pretty girl sitting two feet away from her on the couch. “Uh, it’s their date night.”

It *was* their date night. That wasn’t even a lie. It was just that their idea of a ‘date’ might not align with a normal person’s. Seeing as they had specifically asked Abigail to keep Cassie and Gene out of the way, she had a very good guess as to what they were doing with their time. She almost felt bad for agreeing to help them.

“Mmm. Did you see the news the other day? Nasty stuff.”

“Yeah.” Abigail agreed. The Chesapeake Ripper had started another sounder three days before. She hadn’t needed to see it on the news, although of course she had. She’d had firsthand knowledge.

“I mean, cutting his hands off and burying him in a fire ant mound? Who *thinks* of that stuff?” She sounded more curious than disturbed, although of course she had no way of knowing the full details of the crime.

His hands hadn’t just been cut off. They had been skinned, his bare flesh inundated with a sweet-smelling oil to attract the ants. His stomach had also been sliced open and filled with the same oil, giving his internal organs the same treatment. Hannibal had only cut off his hands after they had been completely decimated by the ants, at which point the man had bled to death from his stomach and his newly hacked-off wrists. It had been... brutal.

(Abigail still hadn’t been told what happened when Will was kidnapped. She had, however, overheard Will saying that it felt like there were ants under his skin, which gave her a

horrible idea about what might have gone down. And, she assumed, had also inspired Hannibal to create his latest tableau with the man's corpse.)

She realized, too late, that Cassie was waiting for an answer. "Yeah." She said. "Awful."

Cassie gave her an odd look, but then shook her head. "Thanks for inviting us over. Mom's always in a mood this time of year when she inevitably finds out that Dad inevitably won't be making it home for the holidays."

Abigail sighed. So apparently *both* of Cassie's parents were douchebags. "It's no trouble." She assured her. "Do you think Gene is doing okay?"

The two girls had arrived shortly after seven. It was only just now eight, but Gene had already gone to sleep in one of the guest rooms. She had been oddly quiet the whole evening, a stark contrast from the last time Abigail had seen her.

"Yeah. She just gets like this sometimes. Most of the time, actually. When we had dinner the other day, that was the most verbal she'd been in weeks."

Abigail hummed in vague agreement, popping a particularly buttery piece of popcorn into her mouth. "I'm kind of getting tired of *Friends*. Want to see what else is on?"

Cassie nodded, passing her the remote, and Abigail smiled at her in thanks.

She wasn't sure when she'd fallen asleep. Only that she woke up slowly, still on the couch, her face buried in Cassie's stomach and their bodies tangled together. The other girl seemed to be asleep as well. The TV was still on, currently somewhere near the end of a bland-looking Hallmark movie that Abigail was sure she hadn't caught the beginning of. The bowl of popcorn had been upended, kernels strewn across the floor.

Abigail disentangled herself from Cassie as gently as she could, blushing furiously as she realized just how compromising their position had been. *Thank god Will and Hannibal*

weren't home yet, she thought to herself, because she would never have been able to live that down.

As she moved away from Cassie's sleeping body, the other girl began to stir. "Abby?" She murmured, eyes fluttering open slowly.

"Sorry." Abigail whispered. "I didn't mean to wake you up."

"It's fine." Her voice was rough from sleep. "What time is it?"

Abigail dug in between the cushions for her phone. When she found it, she glanced at it briefly to check. "A bit after three." She said. "We do have actual guest rooms if you want to..."

Abigail trailed off as she realized Cassie was staring. The other girl's eyes were wide with some undefinable emotion. Something akin to fear... and recognition? *Shit.*

Abigail's hand reached up to her neck. Her scarf had come loose during the night, one end pinned under Cassie's knee and the other just barely draped around Abigail's neck. Her throat was left bare, ugly red scar displayed for all the world to see. She swallowed harshly.

"It's not what you think."

"You're her." Cassie said, her voice shaky. "You're the Shrike's daughter."

Abigail nodded mutely.

"But you're supposed to be *dead*. How did you..."

“The FBI was going to crucify me. They thought I’d helped my father, that I was... I had to fake my death, I had no other choice.” Her voice was pleading, begging Cassie to understand.

“But they found your ear. The Ripper *killed* you, Abigail, he... oh my *god*.”

Abigail could see the moment Cassie understood. “Cassie.” She said quietly. “Please.”

Cassie shook her head, tears beginning to stream down her face. She looked absolutely horrified. Then her eyes darted over to the hallway. “Gene.

“No, Cassie, god no.” Abigail was quick to assure her. “He’d *never* hurt her. He’d never hurt *either* of you.”

“Then why...”

Abigail couldn’t bring herself to lie to her, even if it would end up costing her her only friend. “Because you’re my friend.” She said brokenly. “Because he genuinely cares about you, in his own way. And because... he wanted you out of the way tonight.”

Cassie’s lips parted in surprise. “I... my mother?” She realized.

“I don’t know for sure.” Abigail admitted. “But please, Cassie. I don’t... you’re the only friend I have. I can’t lose you.”

She reached out to take Cassie’s hand, but the other girl flinched away from her. Abigail drew back, hurt.

Cassie stood up, wiping the wetness from her cheek with the back of one sleeve. “I can’t.” She whispered. “I... I just can’t.”

And with that, she fled down the hallway. Moments later, Abigail heard the door to Iphigenia's room slam shut.

She lowered herself back down to the couch, hugging her knees to her chest. And as she sat there, waiting for sunrise, she pretended she couldn't hear Cassie cry.

They found Claudine Hopper-Lounds's body only a few hours later. Abigail didn't get to see it in person, but she didn't have to; an image of it had been posted to TattleCrime before the police had even realized she was missing. Her hair had been dyed ginger and styled into curls, making her look like an almost exact replica of her late sister. In the image, she was still alive, visibly terrified as she stared at something off-camera. The message below the image read 'If you get here within ten minutes, I might survive' and listed an address.

Needless to say, there had been several civilians on-site before anyone thought to call the police. It was a disaster, and Abigail had no doubt that Hannibal and Will had planned it that way. Still, she found that she couldn't appreciate the elegance of it, her mind far too distracted by the situation with Cassie.

Cassie had stayed the rest of the night, thankfully, although she had locked herself in Iphigenia's room and barricaded the door. She had left when Hannibal and Will came back, taking her little sister with her, clearly not willing to spend any more time in a house with the two killers.

Hannibal turned to Abigail after the two girls made their hasty exit. "Did something happen last night? She doesn't strike me as the type to read TattleCrime and I doubt the police will have identified the body."

Abigail cringed, and Hannibal's eyes narrowed. "Ah." He said.

“Ah, what?” Will asked, coming to stand beside them with a frown. He looked exhausted, clearly having stayed up the whole night for his ‘date’.

“It seems our dear little Abigail has let something slip.” Hannibal’s voice was cold, and for a moment Abigail almost allowed herself to believe that he would hurt her.

“I didn’t mean to. I just- I fell asleep, and my scarf, and she-” She cut herself off, looking to Will for help.

He took a step closer, angling himself so that he was in between her and Hannibal. “How much does she know?”

“Everything.” She admitted. “She saw the scar and she... she figured it out herself from there. She- she knows you’re the Ripper.”

That last part was directed at Hannibal. His face was a mask of stone, but she could tell he was furiously coming up with contingency plans. “I see.” He said simply.

“Don’t kill her.” Abigail all but begged. “You can’t- she’s my *friend*.”

“She’s a threat.”

Now Will was glowering at Hannibal. “You killed her mother to *protect* her, you can’t turn around and kill a teenage girl just because she was clever enough to figure it out.”

“If I don’t kill her, we will have to flee the country. Another accusation, so soon after we dealt with Jack, would mean the end for us.”

“Then we run.” Abigail insisted.

Hannibal didn't look convinced.

"I- look, Hannibal, everyone knows it was the Ripper who got Claudine Lounds. If her daughters go missing too- yes, daughters, because you can't take the risk that Cassie said something to Gene- they'll know something's up. All it would take is for one person to place that they've been visiting your house a lot recently, and then you'd both be under suspicion. Killing then won't solve anything, and besides that, *I don't want you to.*" Abigail snapped.

Hannibal looked taken aback, but then he sighed. "Fine. Will, go pack your bags. We'll go to the cliff house for tonight and make further plans in the morning."

Will nodded, but before he could so much as move towards the stairs, the doorbell rang. Everyone froze.

Hannibal was the first one to move, sidling closer to the door and risking a glimpse through the peephole. His expression didn't change, but Abigail almost thought she could see something like confusion in his eyes. "It's her."

Will frowned. "It hasn't even been ten minutes. Why would she come back if she knows-"

He was cut off by Abigail striding past him, opening the door with purpose and intent. Hannibal made an aborted motion to stop her, but he was taken by surprise and didn't react quickly enough.

Cassie had clearly been crying. She looked up at Abigail with dewy eyes, her face splashed with red. "Hey." She said quietly.

Abigail was hyper-aware that Hannibal stood only inches away from them, hidden around the doorframe in case of a misstep. "You came back." She said.

"I had to get Gene out of here." Cassie said by way of explanation. "I had to get her somewhere safe before I could- god, before I could even *think* of having this discussion with

you.”

Abigail nodded. “Hannibal wouldn’t have hurt her.” She promises. She’s fairly certain it’s true; he might have been willing to kill Cassie, however reluctantly, but he would never have done any harm to her little sister. “But okay.”

“I’ve set a timer on my phone.” Cassie warned her, brandishing the object threateningly. “If anything happens to me and I don’t turn it off, it’ll send out a text telling everyone exactly what you are.”

Abigail frowned. “Is this blackmail?” She hadn’t thought Cassie was the type.

The other girl shook her head. “No. Just insurance. I wasn’t about to walk back into a serial killer’s lair without a way to protect myself.” Then she hesitated. “Can I? Come in, I mean. I’m sure you’d rather have this conversation where we can’t be overheard.”

She glanced at Hannibal. He nodded, and Abigail stepped aside to allow Cassie inside. She looked at Hannibal nervously, then Will, before turning back to Abigail. The door shut behind her, trapping her inside.

“I’m not going to tell.” She said.

That was unexpected. “Why not?”

Cassie shook her head, wiping a tear from her eye. “I don’t... I’m pissed off and scared as hell, but I think I’m more upset about the fact that you lied than I am about the serial killer thing. What does that say about me as a person?”

“It’s perfectly natural.” Hannibal assured her, speaking for the first time since she’d arrived. “There is no life without death. Our aversion to the concept is nothing more than societal convention, a denial of man’s true nature.”

Cassie let out a weak half-laugh. “Yeah, that sounds like something a serial killer would say.”

“He says stuff like that all the time.” Will said. “You get used to it. Just wait till he starts talking about how much God likes killing people.”

“You killed my mom.” Cassie pointed out to both of them.

“Yes.” Hannibal was unrepentant.

Beside him, Will frowned. “Have they identified the body? I thought it would take them at least another hour to figure out it wasn’t Freddie.”

“Right.” Cassie said. “Aunt Freddie. Did you kill her, too?”

Will nodded, a silent admission.

To everyone’s surprise, Cassie snorted. “Good.” She said. “What did you do with the body, if you didn’t... display it?”

Will looked over to Hannibal with a cringe. Abigail had a sinking feeling in her gut. “Oh, you *didn’t*.” She groaned.

“...Perhaps that’s a story best saved for another time.” Hannibal suggested.

Cassie glanced between them, frowning, before her eyes widened in realization. “Wait, did you... shit, that’s why you invited us to dinner, isn’t it.”

“In my defense,” Hannibal said, “I was not expecting her to bring the two of you. And I can assure you that the gumbo was completely human-free.”

“...huh. I should probably be more upset about that than I actually am.”

“And you’re not upset that they, you know, murdered your mother?” Abigail had to check.

“Of course I am. But I’m also, like... oddly okay with it? If anyone deserved to get murdered and eaten by a serial killer, it was her.”

Abigail smiled. “Welcome to the family, I guess.”

Cassie smiled back tentatively. Then she seemed to hesitate.

“Cassie?” Abigail asked, her smile morphing into a frown.

“Fuck it,” Cassie said, and the next thing Abigail knew there were lips pressed against hers. She stood stock-still for a moment, frozen in shock, before she found the mental awareness to kiss her back.

When they broke apart, Cassie was smiling. Abigail was surprised to find that she was, too.

“You do realize,” she whispered, “that my parents are standing right there.”

“Worth it.”

Abigail grinned. Yes, it definitely was. “...So are you gonna be a serial killer now, or what?”

Cassie laughed, and Abigail thought that just might be the most beautiful sound she had ever heard.

End Notes

Murder Daughter Cassie! Looks like they won't have to flee the country after all. Come scream at me in the comments now that you're done reading.

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